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Inside APHIS

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Managers Link Special Emphasis Programs to the Vision

By Barbara Patterson, Federal Women's Program Manager, M&B



APHIS PHOTO BY KEVIN CONNER

The Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance (CREC) staff conducted a half-day planning session for all headquarters special emphasis program managers in Riverdale, MD, last November. The meeting focused on taking the steps necessary to link civil rights with one or more of the strategies for reaching the vision in the APHIS Change Agenda.

Terry Medley, associate administrator, gave staff members a formal presentation on the new APHIS vision. Winanne Kreger of M&B's Human Resources Division facilitated the session.

CREC will schedule a full day session of the entire group in February 1996. During this session the group will develop a workplan and discuss strategies for communicating the actions in the plan to field employees. ♦

Clockwise from the 12:00 position are Jerry Coursey, workforce diversity; Cynthia Dunn, Asian/Pacific American and Federal Women's programs; Bhisham Singh, Hispanic Employment program; Linda Moore, Native American and Hispanic programs; Phyllis Tucker, African American program; Meredith Jones, Civil Rights Advisory Committee; Jim Smith, African American program; Elly Cleaver, Asian/Pacific American program; Clarence Lemon, CREC Director.

In This Issue

At the USAHA, panelists look at animal health regulations.	2	Scientists examine the state of their art in the future.	8	IS and U.S.military keep European pests from hitchhiking home.	12
Teams begin work on colocating agency regions.	4	International Marketplace.	10	Social security statements help employees plan finances.	13
Guamanians help PPQ keep pests out of the country.	6	VSV outbreak on Ute Indian lands tests traceback system.	11	Employees find humor in comedian's work strategies.	14
Women's Information Network announces 1996 program.	7	New MSD director chairs a council that serves all MRP.	11	Alumni Organization.	15

USAHA Looks at Animal Health Regulatory Systems

By Kendra Pratt, Public Affairs, LPA

A need for more regulations?!?! Despite what political pundits say about Government downsizing, Federal, State, and industry representatives participating in a panel discussion last November agreed that there is need for regulatory oversight to protect animal health. And this need will continue to grow as animal mobility in interstate marketing and global trade expands.

At the United States Animal Health Association's (USAHA) annual meeting in Reno, NV, these panel members discussing "Innovative Regulatory Approaches to Protecting Animal Health" focused on the following three questions:

- What should be the Government's role in regulatory animal health?
- What innovations should occur in regulatory animal health over the next 5 years?

integrated, user-friendly systems to achieve program goals and to have a range of enforcement tools that can be promptly and effectively applied to ensure compliance with program goals.

In opening discussion, Christian explained that the approaching completion of major disease eradication programs, such as brucellosis and tuberculosis, will end a strict regulatory era of animal health enforcement policy.

"Where do we go from here?" Christian asked. "Innovative regulatory actions could mean developing alternative programs for animal health or taking alternative types of regulatory actions that entail a greater level of collaboration."

Members of the panel variously expressed support for Government oversight in animal health issues and for regulations to protect the

programs improve commerce as well as animal and public health because of the increasing reliance on global trade," said panelist Matt Taylor, from the Alberta Agriculture Livestock Inspection Service of Canada.

Regulatory Models

Recordkeeping and verification of health information have become vital to the well-being of the agriculture industries, as evidenced by panelists' examples of successful regulatory models. Leroy Coffman, the State veterinarian for Oregon, explained how an equine passport system was developed through a collective process with industry in his State to track permit and identification information with minimum economic impact.

"We developed a computerized system to track permits and



APHIS PHOTO BY KENDRA PRATT

The panelists for this Regulatory Enforcement forum in Reno (from left to right) included Paul Rodgers for the American Sheep Industry Association, Gary Weber for the National Cattlemen's Association, Matt Taylor for the Alberta Agriculture Livestock Inspection Service of Canada, Marshall Meyers for the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, Oregon's State Veterinarian Leroy Coffman, Iowa's Area Veterinarian In Charge Kevin Petersburg, Minnesota's State Veterinarian Tom Hagerty, and APHIS Assistant Deputy Administrator for Regulatory Enforcement Ron Stanley.

•How is the integrity of animal health programs ensured with reduced regulation?

Feedback on Vision Element

Alan Christian, director of APHIS' Regulatory Enforcement staff, organized this forum to receive customer input into the APHIS Innovative Regulatory Systems vision element. The goals of this vision element are to have

industries themselves, consumers, and public health. With new technologies and better communications between industry, Federal, and State regulatory agencies, the panel predicted that regulatory actions could transition from being punitive and reactive to actually preventing animal health problems from happening.

"The agricultural community has recognized that regulatory

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address problems specifically," Coffman said. "We informed the industry through education instead of enforcement, and industry reaction has been supportive."

Industry Panelists

The panelists representing industry emphasized the need for industry involvement at all levels of policymaking, particularly at the beginning stages, to ensure that regulatory actions are appropriate and effective. Other panel members, such as John Adams of the National Milk Producers Federation and Paul Rodgers of the American Sheep Industry Association, cited examples of voluntary disease control programs and quality assurance programs as alternative regulatory approaches that have benefited their industries.

"Historically the dairy industry has been highly regulated because of problems with brucellosis and tuberculosis from raw milk consumption," said John Adams. "With fewer resources in the public sector, industry is taking more of a role in quality assurance to confront issues like residues and other public health issues that are often animal-health based."

New Federal Role

Panelist Kevin Petersburg, APHIS' area veterinarian in charge for Iowa, added that the Government's role to support industry's efforts in the regulatory process would be providing information and educating producers and the public about the cost-effectiveness of prevention. "When education fails, punishment must change behavior; but punishment does not necessarily need to be a fine," Petersburg said.

Petersburg suggested that regulators could achieve compliance by taking the following alternative actions: publicizing regulatory changes more effectively,

demonstrating the value of a national premises identification system, creating markets for less marketable animals, using a risk-based inspection process, and rewarding consistent producer compliance.

Alternative Animal Industries

Alternative regulatory systems will have to be implemented to effectively regulate alternative animal industries, such as the exotic pet trade. Marshall Meyers, a panelist representing the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, said the pet industry has had a love/hate relationship with Government that he attributes partially to a perception that some regulatory responses have been reactionary. Meyers also recommended that USAHA take on a more active role as a clearinghouse for maintaining some producer information.

Meyers predicted the pet industry will become more regulated because of its size, its diversity, and the complexity of issues surrounding companion animals. For example, he said developing a passport system for interstate movement of exotic animals would be a mammoth challenge for industry and Government collaboration.

Early Collaboration

The panel concluded by encouraging APHIS to continue innovative regulatory systems by bringing stakeholders early into the processes of making policy. And stakeholders were encouraged to bring scientific and economic issues—not emotional aspects—to the table when collaborating with Government regulators.

"I hope this doesn't end here," said Dr. Gary Weber, a panelist for the National Cattlemen's Association. "We all recognize the challenge of working together toward achieving our mutual goals."

Other members of the panel included Dr. Dwight Bruno, New York Division of Animal Industry; Dr. Thomas Hagerty, Minnesota Division of Animal Health; and Ron Stanley, assistant deputy administrator for APHIS' Regulatory Enforcement. ♦

Innovative Regulations

The strategy team for innovative regulatory systems (part of the Change Agenda) is looking for volunteers who will think of new ways to meet regulatory needs. In December this team sent out a letter inviting employees to help the agency achieve two goals for regulatory activities of the future:

1. Have integrated user-friendly regulatory systems to achieve program goals.

2. Have a range of enforcement tools that can be promptly and effectively applied to ensure compliance with program goals.

Within each goal, the strategy team has incorporated several suggested tasks, such as establishing reward systems, designing programs of self-regulation, and expanding and improving penalty capabilities.

"Traditionally, APHIS has relied heavily on rulemaking to achieve program objectives," says Alan Christian, a member of this core team and director of APHIS' Regulatory Enforcement staff.

"Although we know we can accomplish our regulatory mission using current methods, we also know that our current system of rulemaking has gained a reputation of being slow and being inflexible and unresponsive to the needs of stakeholders." Employees interested in improving and innovating regulatory systems can participate in two ways: contribute to an idea bank that the team is currently organizing; form small teams to develop pilot innovative strategies.

14 Regional Offices Await Site Selection Decision on Merger

Why the AMT Has Decided to Consolidate Regional Offices

For the past year, employees have been putting a lot of energy into reinvention and visioning our future. We are now taking a concrete step toward realizing our vision by consolidating regional offices. With this step, employees also will be aligning themselves with USDA's reinvention initiatives and participating in a USDA goal to consolidate and share office space.

The initiative for colocating regional offices originally came from VS and PPQ regional directors (RD's) of the northeast almost 5 years ago. These RD's (Don Husnik and Bill Buisch) submitted a proposal for colocating. The APHIS Management Team (AMT) liked the

approach so much, they requested that a design team study regional restructuring on an agencywide level.

This design team, made up of six field employees and one headquarters employee, presented its final report to the AMT last August. In September, the AMT adopted one of the alternatives recommended by this team.

The AMT's decision was to consolidate and colocate 14 regional offices into 2—a western and eastern hub. In these two regional offices, ADC, PPQ, REAC, and VS will remain as separate units but share employees who will provide services that cut across program lines.

Implementation coordinator for the project is Joe Frick of M&B's Management Services Division. A year ago Frick was managing the Headquarters Relocation Project (HRPO), moving employees from Hyattsville, MD, to Riverdale, MD, 3 miles away.

Frick and his team, made up of Susan Bouffier (MSD, implementation), Carol Tuszynski (VS, budget), Cheri Oswalt (LPA, communications and congressional liaison), and Bernice Granzow (MSD, office manager) is the foundation team that has made a 4-year commitment to the implementation effort. With the aid of the present RD's and sector supervisors, these employees are forming teams of their own from qualified field employees in the regions.

"We're shooting for 70 percent participation of field employees on each team," explains Frick. "It's essential that we have highly qualified people on the project. And so far, the RD's and sector supervisors are giving us the bright and talented people who are volunteering to help." Essential, too is the input of all RD's and sector supervisors. "We will be interviewing them to help us understand their recommendations and how they see the regions operating," Frick says.

In addition to the implementation team, the AMT selected team leaders for five other teams needed on the project. As they complete their assignments, these teams will disband, leaving the implementation team to carry out their work.

Site Selection

Since October, a site selection team headed by PPD's Janet Berls has been evaluating 22 potential locations for the two consolidated regional offices. Team members include a representative from ADC, M&B, PPQ, REAC, VS, and headquarters units (BBEP, LPA, PPD, and R&D). The map on this page shows the new regional structure and the sites under consideration.

The site selection team is using four criteria to evaluate each site: operating costs, accessibility, quality of life, and relocation costs. All the criteria have equal weight. To evaluate each site for quality of life, the team examined sites' rankings in *Places Rated Almanac* and *Money Magazine* and sought input from employees. PPD economist Russ Caplen prepared a survey and sent it to all employees in the current ADC, PPQ, REAC, and VS regional and sector offices. The team also sent surveys to Minneapolis and Riverdale employees

who provide services that will be transferred to the new regional offices.

The team reviewed agency records to come up with operating costs, accessibility, and relocation costs. For example, analysts got information on all meetings held at current regional and sector offices in 1995 and then estimated the cost of holding those meetings at each proposed site. Other analysts reviewed all 1995 travel vouchers to get a picture of where employees traveled and then calculated the costs of travel to the most frequently visited locations (minimum of three visits) from the proposed sites. Travel time was analyzed to get a picture of accessibility of the sites.

The site selection team will submit its recommendations to the AMT in February.

"The move could include as many as 250 to 260 people," explains Frick. "This is the total number of employees currently in regional offices. If the new eastern and western hubs turn out to be locations not currently housing regional employees, we would need to move the maximum number." Some employees in Minneapolis, MN, and in Riverdale, MD, whose functions will support regional offices, could also be moved. The agency will bear the costs of relocating employees.

"Once we have the site locations, we will contact GSA and the Department to find out if there are other Federal agencies at that location that might want to colocate," continues Frick. "If there are, we could also end up colocating with other agencies as well."

Other Relocation Teams

Other teams designated by the AMT have been organizing and are already at work. A staffing team led by ITS' Chris Zakarka has identified the ITS human resource requirements for each regional hub and will be developing the information resource management requirements each hub will need. Support will include telephones, video conferencing, satellite, network management, computers, and closed-circuit television.

An internal communications team is developing a strategy for communicating information about the consolidation to all employees

New APHIS Regions with Proposed Regional Office Sites



In addition to these teams, the AMT designated two design teams. Under PPD Director Bill Wallace, one design team is looking at the support services needed from headquarters units—M&B (except Minneapolis offices) resource management staffs, LPA, OPD, and PPD. This team will be proposing and designing effective and efficient support for the new hubs.

PPQ's Helene Wright and VS' Bob Nervig are heading a design team for field structure. They will be reviewing program functions and developing plans to locate these functions in the hubs. They are also looking at field administrative functions to see how they support program functions and analyzing operational functions to see how they might be consolidated or cross utilized.

For some field employees, cross utilization and consolidation of resources could lead to opportunities for advancement. For example, positions in each hub will have the current regional functions plus

more from headquarters or other field components. These multiple positions at various grade levels should provide more potential for employees than the smaller individual regional offices have now.

Timelines

"The decision on a site location will be just in time to include the consolidation plan in the 1998 budget cycle," Frick explains. "We must have the solicitation packages for acquiring space at the locations ready to go out in May this year. Actual implementation of the regional restructuring effort will begin in October 1997. We could start consolidating even earlier than October as leases expire," explains Frick. "We have 2 years to complete the consolidation.

"We have three principles that all of us on the implementation team are using to guide us through this project" explains Frick. "The first is to recognize that we are implementing a decision. The second is to involve employees in

the restructuring. Every team is including a process for involving employees. The site selection team used the survey, for example. The third is to keep before us our vision of one APHIS. By bringing together all major program delivery units into two regional hubs, we will be manifesting our one-APHIS vision."

Frick learned some lessons from HRPO about how to handle large-scale moves, and he believes APHIS can profit from those lessons in implementing regional restructuring. He believes the project must be an agencywide effort, with good communication channels in place early on and special sensitivity to the employees who will have to relocate. Unlike HRPO, this move will involve dual operations. While the new regions are setting up, and the old offices are shutting down, groups will be overlapping services and will need to coordinate carefully.

"I have a goal of making sure we make available to employees who will be

moving all the resources available at our disposal, including Employee Assistance Program, counseling, family assistance, and outplacement," says Frick. "We know that some employees will not be able to move, but we will assist in finding them a job."

"We're already looking for a mechanism for communicating with all the RD's simultaneously," explains Frick. "We're considering a shared electronic mail box or similar device. Communication is key; we are depending on people from the field, so we must be able to share information quickly."

Frick recalls the HRPO move, where communication with employees was one of the keys to its success. This time there will be either an Internet address for the project, voice mail, groupwise, or another place where employees around the country can send concerns. "Our focus will be the employees who are directly affected by this move, but we want to keep everyone informed," Frick says. ♦

Small Island's Local Quarantine Officers Do a Big Job

By Fred Thomas, Officer in Charge, Guam, PPQ

Not everyone has heard of Guam, and probably few could tell you where it is. Guam is an island in the Pacific Ocean about 500 miles east of the Philippines. It is a small melting pot of about 140,000 people of different cultures, but the main culture is the native Chamorro. Guam is about a 3-hour flight from Japan or the Philippines and a 13-hour flight from Los Angeles (if you could fly non-stop).

APHIS employees may know about Guam because of the brown tree snake, which has devastated the native bird population there. But it may be surprising to some that PPQ has employees on the island enforcing USDA regulations because Guam is a territory of the United States. PPQ employees also work on the nearby islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, part of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), another U.S. possession.

As the current officer in charge in Guam, I have been on the island for 3 1/2 years. Four other officers have worked on the island, beginning with Ralph Iwamoto in 1981, followed by Dale Rush, Bill Snell, and Hilda Montoya.

Role of Local Agencies

For PPQ, Guam is unique in that local government agencies enforce most APHIS regulations. The Guam Department of Agriculture and the Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency enforce the regulations on Guam, while in CNMI, the Department of Lands and Natural Resources enforces PPQ regulations. Even though Guam is a territory of the United States, we treat the island like a foreign country where pests are concerned. Because Guam has the melon fly, a pest of fruits and vegetables, only two agricultural products of Guam can be imported into the United States—taro, a yam-like root, and palm hearts. All other products are prohibited from entering the United States.

As the officer in charge in Guam, I am responsible for training local government employees and monitoring their enforcement of the regulations. I have found that the local quarantine officers do an excellent job. They are very protective



APHIS PHOTO BY FRED THOMAS

Guamanian plant quarantine officer Jason Paulino is a cooperater who enforces APHIS regulations on Guam. Here he inspects a passenger's baggage.

of their island environment and want to keep out foreign pests and diseases that could wreck havoc on an island limited in its flora and fauna. The brown tree snake is a constant reminder on the island of what a foreign pest can do to the environment.

Tourist Mecca

The Guam Airport Authority is in the middle of more than doubling the size of the airport to help facilitate the ever increasing flow of tourists to this island paradise. During the 1994 season, more than a million tourists visited Guam. In 1995 Guam passed the million mark in October and expected to see more than 1,200,000 tourists visit the island. Guam is busy and getting busier. The chances of pests entering Guam are greater and greater with the increasing influx of tourists.

To accommodate the increase in tourism, the Guam Department of Agriculture has been given the okay by the local legislature to hire over 20 new quarantine inspectors plus 4 dogs and dog handler teams. When the new recruits begin working, the Guamanian staff will increase from 12 to 32 officers. The local authorities also hope to purchase needed equipment, such

as an X-ray machine, to help in the interception of foreign pests. The Guamanians are pleased with the opportunity of being able to better protect their island.

The Guam Customs agency is also employing 55 more officers to deal with the influx of tourists to Guam. The local customs officers are also APHIS cooperators, who help in the enforcement of APHIS regulations.

Inspection Station

The local government has been trying to establish a USDA-approved plant inspection station on Guam since 1981 when the first PPQ officer arrived on the island. We are now very close to establishing one. Since I have been on the island, I have been working with local senators, the directors of the Department of Agriculture, and the Airport Authority. A memorandum of understanding has been written and approved by APHIS for the facility.

Having an inspection station on island would be a great help for Guamanians who want to bring plants in from Asia. Now they must first ship these plants to Hawaii for inspection. Having their own inspection station means Guamanians could import plants directly

Women's Information Network Offers 1996 Program

By Sue Izumi, Freedom of Information Act, LPA

For the coming year, the APHIS Women's Information Network (WIN) has planned a series of career enrichment workshops to be held in Riverdale, MD. Employees will be notified of upcoming events by E-mail and posters. Future seminars include: APHIS Vision, Change Agenda and Continual Learning in January; A video: "Image & Self-Projection" by Julie White in February; Self-Esteem: "Celebrate Yourself" in March; Effective Writing in April; Health Issues for Women in May; Network and Networking Panel Discussion in June; Resume Preparation in July; Career Enhancement in August; and, Time Management in September.

WIN recently established a Federal Women's Program (FWP) section in the Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance (CREC) staff's cultural library, a part of the main Library located on the first floor of the USDA Center in Riverdale. In the FWP section there are a variety of books, magazines, publications, and VCR tapes on women's issues. You may borrow any of the reference materials for a period of up to 2 weeks by completing a library check out form, which is available at the librarian's counter. A list of available materials is available from Cynthia Dunn (301) 734-5555 or by FAX (301) 734-3698.

Mike Alexander, Special Emphasis Program Manager for USDA's

Office of Civil Rights Enforcement (OCRE) Staff, recently visited the CREC cultural library in Riverdale. He was so impressed with the library, he has recommended that the OCRE start a cultural library for the Department.

In January 1992, CREC established WIN to support the federally mandated FWP. Each APHIS program area has one or more WIN committee members who meet the fourth Wednesday of each month. WIN members provide information to APHIS and our partner agency, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) concerning women's issues. In addition, WIN presents seminars and workshops for all interested employees. ♦



APHIS PHOTO BY KEVIN CONNER

Administrator Lonnie King (right) recognized WIN member achievements at the October WIN meeting. From left to right are Sue Izumi, Clarence Lemon, Linda Story, Jan Holmes, Pat Roberts, Anna Grayson, Cynthia Dunn, Eleanora Lassiter, Barbara Patterson, Theresa Dyer, Terishra Yeager, Elaine Solano, Eva Ring, and Carolyn Corbe.

from Asia to Guam at a much lower cost than the cost they pay to send them first to Hawaii.

Currently, we are waiting for the U.S. Navy to officially turn over one of its buildings to the Airport Authority. The Guam Airport Authority is amenable to assigning the building to the local Department of Agriculture for a plant inspection

station. This station will be locally staffed with Guam Department of Agriculture officers and assisted by entomologists, plant pathologists, and botanists from the University of Guam.

Guam is a great place to work, and I will miss it when it comes time to move on. It's a friendly island, and I have made many

friends. Whether you come here to work or to visit, you will enjoy your stay on Guam. ♦

Editor's note: Since writing this article, Fred Thomas left Guam to accept the position of officer in charge of the SeaTac Airport and Plant Inspection Station. Fred now lives and works in Seattle, WA.



Agency Scientists Look at Their Roles in the Future

This past November, agency scientists met in Riverdale, MD, for 3 days to discuss the current state of science in APHIS and to share their vision of science's role in the agency's future.

"The conference came out of the APHIS visioning process," says Sally McCammon, science advisor to the administrator and champion of the scientific and information technology strategy of the change agenda. Other champions are VS Deputy Administrator Don Husnik, PPD Associate Deputy Administrator Al Elder, and VS Associate Deputy Administrator Joan Arnoldi. The idea for the conference arose at about the same time from the Science Fellows program committee headed by Arnoldi. This group, which brings young scientists to work for APHIS for a year on fellowships, realized that much might be learned from bringing together representative scientific leaders from all the APHIS units to focus on the state of science.

"We are a science-based agency," McCammon continues, "so we need to make sure that our regulations, international standards developed under GATT and NAFTA, and program decisions have the approaches, the knowledge base, and rationales needed to be effective."

Setting the Direction

About 50 people representing the APHIS scientific community attended the conference to set the direction that will ensure the science base APHIS needs for the future. Setting the direction includes identifying and developing steps for implementing the science and technology element of the vision and change agenda and strengthening the network of agency scientists across program units.

APHIS already has laid the foundation for much of the technology of the vision element. The Integrated Systems Acquisition Project contract is in place, and Information Technology Services is working on implementation (See the September/October issue of *Inside APHIS*). "So we wanted this

To assure science-based policy and decisions, APHIS identifies, acquires, applies, develops, transfers, and facilitates the use of modern technologies, scientific methods, and analytical methods, including forecasting and risk analysis. The agency acquires and maintains the best scientific and technological expertise and uses emerging technologies and state-of-the-art information management systems.

—Science and Technology
Vision Element

conference to concentrate on our science," McCammon says.

"We have opened up avenues for crossing program lines at this conference," says Richard Orr, a senior entomologist in PPD. "We can now use these avenues to communicate with each other. I hope that science will play an increasing role in the agency's decisions in the future. I am concerned that other issues will take precedence over science."

To help each program delivery unit get an idea of the science being used in the other units, the design team working with McCammon and Arnoldi invited each person to bring along a poster session. The posters ranged in subject from how staffs approach problems—how they look at biocontrol, for example—to technical solutions to specific diseases—monoclonal antibodies, for example. This session also provided a diverse group with the opportunity to get to know each other and their areas of expertise.

Future Roles of Scientists

The conference itself was designed to challenge scientists to define the current state of science in agency programs and then to project what that science will look like in the future and what future scientists will be doing in the agency. There was general agreement on the things that will be important. Future scientists will work in the global arena with international issues and domestically with environmental issues. A key tool will be risk assessment, and it must be scientifically based. Also, scientists will need to know how to testify at hearings and explain our approaches at meetings. They will also be designing protocols—procedures that the industry will have to follow to ensure that plants, animals, and their products are healthy and free of pests and diseases. Scientists must make decisions on the best options for a program, whether they be chemicals, cultural practices, or biological controls. "It's going to take a lot of science to conduct the programs of the future," McCammon says.

"The public hearings held last summer on avocado imports are an indicator of what the role of science and scientists in APHIS will be in the future," says McCammon. With few exceptions, the panelists at the hearings were our team of scientists who had developed the risk assessment. Their job at the hearing was to discuss the scientific basis for our proposal to import avocados grown in Michoacan, Mexico, and to explain to the industry why they chose the methodologies they chose.

"In the future, our regulations must be transparent," McCammon continues. "By transparent, I mean defensible, that is, based on science. We will have to give the industry logical and understandable reasons why we regulate and operate the way we do. And those reasons require scientific information."

Action Planning

After finishing the look at the science of the future, participants turned to examining opportunities

and obstacles to the desired future state of science. However, most of the conference was spent on action planning.

"What the experts in OPD have taught us, says McCammon, "is that if we are to reach our vision of the future, it's because people are willing to take on the challenges they identify as necessary for the agency to survive." The group prioritized its action steps and individuals volunteered to support the steps they cared about.

Donna Carver, an analytic epidemiologist at VS' Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH), was willing to volunteer. "The people at this conference were sincere about wanting to make a difference," she says. "We were empowered and charged with making things happen."

Carver volunteered to work on two of the action steps—the scientific directory (action step 3) and outside resources (action step 6). "I feel confident that McCammon will champion our work in the office of the administrator," she says.

Nine Action Steps

Teams formed around nine action steps, listed here in order of priority:

1. Set up a science advisory council. The council will focus on coordinating and facilitating across program units. An interim team, with representation from each unit, has formed. (See sidebar.) These members are putting together a plan for a permanent team. The champion is McCammon.

2. Develop a scientific career pathway for scientists in APHIS. Champions are Louise Henderson and McCammon.

3. Develop a directory of scientific expertise within APHIS. Champions are Keith Redding (BBEP) and Dave Graddick (M&B).

4. Create a planning process to ensure science-based policy and decisionmaking and to identify emerging pest and disease issues. The science advisory council is championing this step.

5. Use intellectual resources across the agency; form multidisciplinary teams. Champions are Farouk Hamdy (IS) and Ray Sterner (ADC).

6. Partner with outside resources so that APHIS can leverage its scientific resources to provide the science base needed. Champion is George Linz (ADC).



APHIS PHOTO BY DENNIS TRAINUM

Participating in action planning are (from left) Joe Ford, BBEP; Deborah Beasley, REAC; and David Siev, BBEP. OPD facilitator Bill Zyback listens to the discussion.

7. Form a quality assurance group that will assure that APHIS is giving customers and stakeholders the quality they expect from APHIS products. Champion is Ron Berger (BBEP).

8. Acquire scientific knowledge. Champion is Norm Leppla (NBCI).

9. Form a public relations group to communicate the role and relevance of science to APHIS and to agriculture. Champion is Debra Beasley (REAC).

Collaboration Across Units

"It's easy to leave a meeting like this charged up," says Ray Sterner, research psychologist at ADC's National Wildlife Research Center. "But I've learned that whatever happens rests on the individuals who were there to follow through. This time I picked something small, in my line of work, that I know I can make happen. I'm going to facilitate a pilot project to look at potential

avian vector transmission of bovine tuberculosis with Scott Hurd, VS analytical epidemiologist at CEAH." (action step 5) Wild birds, such as ravens, visit ranches and could be vectors of the disease.

"This project is an example of how APHIS scientists can cooperate across units," Sterner continues. "One person may have the expertise in a narrow area that could help others who are groping for answers. In ADC, our expertise at catching and radio tracking wild birds could help in an experiment to see if there is a possible link between ravens and tuberculosis."

The teams now forming around the nine action steps are going to develop tasks and timeframes.

"I was very impressed with the group, McCammon says. It took a concerted effort to accomplish our plan and find our direction, but these priorities are those that will make a difference." ♦

Interim Science Advisory Council

ADC
BBEP
IS
OA
PPD
PPQ

REAC
VS

Dick Curnow, Director, Denver Wildlife Research Center
David Siev, Epidemiologist, Veterinary Biologics
Pat Gomes, Asst. Director, Science and Technology
Sally McCammon, Science Advisor, APHIS
Richard Orr, Sr. Entomologist
Robin Huettel, Chief Operations Officer;
Dale Meyerdirk, Chief Operations Officer
Debra Beasley, Sr. Staff Veterinarian
Scott Hurd, Epidemiologist, CEAH;
Randall Levings, Chief, Vet. Biologics Lab, NVSL

Trade and trade issues now touch many agency programs, expanding so rapidly and becoming so important that they are now part of the new APHIS mission and vision. Here is an overview of major trade initiatives and accomplishments of the last several months. Tom Cramer of the VS National Center for Import and Export (NCIE), Chuck Havens and Nick Gutierrez of PPQ's Phytosanitary Issues Management team (PIMT), and Bonnie King of IS' Trade Support Team all contributed to this and last issue's column.

Bolivia—The 450 llamas and alpacas that were in pre-embarkation quarantine in Bolivia have arrived at the Harry S Truman Animal Import Center to begin their 90-day quarantine prior to release into the United States on March 4.

Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina—IS and PPQ employees are working with these countries to reverse recently imposed bans on the importation of U.S. host fruits of the oriental fruit fly (OFF). As a result of these discussions, Ecuador has agreed to accept imports of OFF host material unless it originates from California. Chuck Havens of PPQ's PIMT, Jim Mackley, IS regional director in Chile, and the Foreign Agricultural Service are continuing to work with all three countries to address

their concerns; we hope to re-open the market in these countries for California produce in the near future.

Mexico—U.S. wheat exports that were being held at the Mexican border are now being allowed to move into Mexico. Mexican authorities were initially concerned about weed seeds and ergot that had been detected in the wheat, but resampling on November 18-19 revealed only very low levels of these substances.

Taiwan—After more than 3 years of negotiations, Taiwan has lifted its embargo on U.S. swine. The embargo was imposed in 1991 because of the presence of porcine respiratory and reproductive syndrome in the United States. In October, VS' NCIE also facilitated the exportation of 400 Pennsylvania goats to Taiwan.

Turkey—VS' NCIE recently completed negotiations with Turkey concerning requirements for exporting U.S. breeding, feeder, and slaughter cattle to that country, as well as bovine semen and embryos. It is estimated that up to 150,000 U.S. cattle will be exported to Turkey by the end of 1996. During October, 3,700 Pennsylvania cattle and 1,069 bred dairy heifers from Virginia were exported to Turkey.

Russia—Najam Faizi of NCIE has negotiated a new animal health agreement with Russia concerning the exportation of day-old chicks and hatching eggs to that country.

PRC—Shipments of 158 ostriches from Oklahoma and 21 ostriches from Texas recently departed for the People's Republic of China. The PRC may be developing into a significant market for U.S. ratites.

Venezuela—A project is underway to import bovine embryos from Venezuela. NCIE's Roger Perkins is handling the negotiations. The importation is expected to occur sometime after January 1, when testing of the donor dams and contact animals will have been completed. This will be the first bovine embryo importation from a country that has foot-and-mouth disease.

Morocco—A team of APHIS and ARS employees reviewed tomato production areas in Morocco in November to evaluate Moroccan proposals for exporting red tomatoes to this country. Sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the technical exchanges concentrated on methods for developing a systems approach for the tomato exports and conducting research to prove varietal resistance of their tomatoes to Medfly. ♦

GATT Participants Gather in Miami for Trade Talks



Alex Thiermann, (left) IS deputy administrator, moderated a panel on "Harmonizing regulatory standards: Sanitary, Phytosanitary, and Food Safety issues" at the Miami Conference on the Caribbean and Latin America early last December. Thiermann facilitated a discussion on the need for enhanced transparency and greater harmonization of regulatory standards within the Americas under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Bruno Faidutti Navarrete, coordinator of the Andean Pact, is on the right.

APHIS photo by Kendra Pratt

Cooperators Control VSV Outbreak on Indian Lands

By Brian Trout, CEAH, VS

Cooperation between Tribal governments, the Federal Government, and the States passed a difficult test when the current vesicular stomatitis virus (VSV) outbreak spread to the Ute Indian lands near Ouray, UT, in September 1995.

The process started when a tribal rancher observed lesions in the mouth of three of his horses. The lesions looked like those he had seen on an APHIS flyer describing VSV. He sought the assistance of a private veterinarian, Mark Dennis of Roosevelt, UT, who made a tentative diagnosis of VSV.

Dennis notified Richard Jenks, Jr., the assistant director for the Ute Indian Tribe's Fish and Wildlife Department, and Utah State veterinarian Mike Marshall. Jenks contacted the Ute Indian Tribe's Business Council. Marshall contacted Cary Peterson, the Utah commissioner of agriculture, Robert DeCarolis, the area veterinarian in charge in Utah, and the VS Western Regional Office in Englewood, Co.

After a positive diagnosis for VSV was confirmed by the National Veterinary Service's Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, IA, the Western Regional Office contacted the

Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH) in Fort Collins, CO, to conduct a field investigation.

Mike Dalrymple, a veterinary epidemiologist at CEAH, responded to the request. Dalrymple reported that normally a State quarantine zone of a 10-mile radius is placed around an infected premises. But in this instance, the quarantine zone would have to include Bureau of Land Management lands, a Federal wildlife refuge, Ute Indian Tribal lands, and private property. The matter was further complicated because Indian reservation lands are not subject to State or Federal jurisdiction.

Peterson and DeCarolis met with the Ute Tribal Council and area producers to explain how quarantines are usually placed and released and to discuss how the quarantine would aid in reducing spread of the disease. The Ute Indian Tribal Council decided to establish the 10-mile radius quarantine around the infected premises.

The effectiveness of a quarantine zone requires cooperation from livestock producers, no matter where one is established.

"The quarantine was placed at a time of year when producers

market their animals," Dalrymple explains. "Because of the quarantine, producers stood to lose thousands of dollars, but they knew that if the disease spread the losses would be much greater."

Jenks reported a high level of cooperation between Ute producers and private land owners. He added that follow-up visits by APHIS veterinarians and tribal officials to the infected site in November showed that the horses's lesions had healed and no new cases had been discovered.

Aggressive investigation of VSV occurs because the disease causes lesions in cattle, other ruminants, and swine that are similar to those seen in foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). (Horses can be infected with VSV but not with FMD). Laboratory tests are required to tell these two diseases apart. FMD was eradicated from U.S. livestock in 1929. If an outbreak of FMD were to occur, the economic impact would be devastating. ♦

Editor's Note: As of December 31, 1995, quarantines were released on all premises in all States. The outbreak was officially declared to be over as of January 15, 1996.

Council Formed to Support MRP Contracts and Purchases

By Joe Taylor, Management Services Division, M&B

M&B's Management Services Division (MSD) recently formed the Management and Regulatory Programs (MRP) Acquisition Council to help improve contracting, purchasing, and realty support for APHIS, AMS, and GIPSA. Chaired by Joanne Munno, MSD's new director, membership includes employees from MSD, the Field Servicing Office, the National Veterinary Services Laboratories, the PPQ Southeast Regional Office, the VS Southeast Regional Office, and PPQ's Mission, TX, facility.

The Council brings program and support representatives together to help identify customer service needs, discuss changes in procurement, help establish policy priorities, and get information out

quickly. "By working closely with field representatives during the policy and system development process," Munno said, "we hope to implement procurement reforms, streamline processes, and make acquisition systems more responsive to program needs."

Topics discussed at the first Council meeting, held this past November in Riverdale, MD, included the following:

1. The Council charter and membership.

2. Briefings on three major Departmental initiatives—the plan to acquire and implement a new USDA-wide automated procurement system within two years; the Foundation Financial Information System and its impact on procure-

ment; and Business process re-engineering of VISA/Third Party Draft Systems.

3. A proposal to grant minor construction contracting authority on a pilot basis to selected facilities.

4. Delegation of authority for Federal Information Processing (computers, supplies, and services).

5. The new ISAP contract for computer equipment, software, and services.

For copies of briefing materials, the Council's charter, and a membership list, call Karen Goldstein, Executive Secretary of the MRP Acquisition Council, at 301-734-5473. ♦

Military Inspectors Know That Every Grain of Dirt Is Suspect

By Robert Szostek, Public Affairs Officer for the Customs Executive Agency, U.S. European Command.

Washing every grain of dirt from jeeps before they are shipped back to the United States is not the new Army recruit's nightmare. It's part of a program in place since 1979 to prevent foreign pests and diseases from hitching a ride to the United States on military equipment.

For the past year, Dave Reeves, IS employee based in Mannheim, Germany, has been training military customs inspectors at 77 European bases to protect U.S. agriculture.

"This military preclearance program is cost-effective for both APHIS and Defense," says Reeves. "By training military inspectors to clean and inspect Army, Navy and Air Force cargo shipped to the United States to make sure it is free of soil, we expedite military shipments while preventing soil-borne pests and diseases from entering the country."

"Military equipment is too sensitive and valuable to be left hanging around docks waiting for inspection and cleaning," explains Norman Kaucher, program manager of the U.S. European Command's Customs Executive Agency. "So we wash and inspect it overseas and then ship it straight to its destination, avoiding delays and handling or storage fees." Precleared troops flying home from overseas exercises can fly directly to inland air bases, saving airport landing charges and the hassle of unloading and reloading for inspection, Kaucher adds. Military inspectors know the equipment and where the dirt can hide. They can also dispose of the dirt and vegetable matter detected without any expensive treatment.

"My job is to ensure that the military's inspectors are properly



Jean Morrison of the 560th Military Police Company inspects an Army 5-ton truck in Mannheim, Germany.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY ROBERT SZOSTEK

trained and are following the correct inspectional procedures," says Reeves. "We also keep the military informed about our import restrictions on agricultural products, and their public affairs officers publicize these restrictions in the armed forces' media."

Inspector training takes place in Worms, Germany, an appropriately named town for an agriculture class. Army, Navy and Air Force personnel go there to learn how to inspect military cargo, personal property shipments, and private vehicles. At the training, Reeves also updates them about the latest threats to U.S. agriculture.

Threats from Europe

The most threatening pest to come out of Europe recently is the Asian gypsy moth. It showed up in Germany in 1993, chewing up thousands of acres of prime woodland. The pest spread, via an uninspected shipment of Army ammunition, to Cherry Point, NC, where a cleanup campaign is still underway. Spurred by the threat, the military public affairs personnel started an anti-moth campaign

to alert overseas troupes of the danger. This campaign has prevented a repeat of the Cherry Point incident, even though huge amounts of ammunition and equipment have been shipped from Europe to the States recently as part of military-force reductions.

Another European pest the military is alert to is the Mediterranean fruit fly, which keeps getting introduced into the United States to plague U.S. citrus growers. This pest can be found in Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey, all countries where the U.S. military has bases. The Mediterranean climate also favors many varieties of snails that do not occur in the States and are voracious agricultural pests. European meat and meat products are generally banned from import because Europe is not free of foot-and-mouth disease.

"Recently we noticed that seizures of meat products at U.S. mail centers were increasing, although the number of troops in Europe has gone down and a system of fines is in place to deter salami smuggling," says Reeves. "So we are working with the

Social Security Statements Help With Financial Planning

You're somewhere between ages 30 and 50—far from retirement. Why should you care about your Social Security benefits? It's too soon, right? Wrong. There's some valuable information you should have now.

Knowing approximately how much money you can expect in Social Security benefits is an important part of your personal financial planning, regardless of your age. You should know how much you and/or your family may receive if you become disabled and can't work. You should know what your family's benefit may be if you die. And you also should know how much your benefits will be when you retire.

Is It Important?

Why is this information so important? Because it can serve as a base on which to build your financial future. You'll be able to decide if you need additional disability insurance and/or life insurance to protect your family. You'll also be able to decide how much you'll need in private investments to pay for such things as your children's education and to supplement your retirement income.

It's easy to get your Social Security benefit information. Just

call the toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213, for a Form SSA-7004 (Request for Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement). Complete and return the form to Social Security; within four to six weeks you'll receive a Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement (PEBES) in the mail.

The statement includes a year-by-year display of your earnings and an estimate of the Social Security and Medicare taxes you've paid. It's a good idea to request a statement at least once every three years to check this information and see if it agrees with your records. Accurate earnings records are important because Social Security benefits are directly related to the earnings credited to your Social Security number. It's usually easier to correct a recent error than it is to find and correct old records.

To Report Errors

Contact your employer to correct any errors in the last two years of earnings. If the error involves earlier earnings, call Social Security's toll-free number 1-800-772-1213 to request a correction. You'll be asked to provide evidence, such as W-2s and pay stubs, to support the requested change.

If you're age 60 or older, you don't have to ask Social Security for a Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement. You should receive one this year. By September 30, 1995, Social Security will have mailed statements to about nine million persons age 60 or older who are not receiving Social Security benefits. If you don't receive yours by that date, contact the agency's toll free number to request one.

Beginning in October 1995, and each year thereafter, Social Security will automatically send a statement to those who attain age 60 during the year and are not receiving a Social Security benefit. By the turn of the century, all workers age 25 or older will receive a Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement each year to help them plan their financial future. They also should check each year's record carefully when they receive it to avoid potential problems in the future. ♦

Debra Busch, M&B's Human Resources Operations, submitted this article in the belief that employees need relevant information about their future benefits. Reprinted from Social Security Courier, July 1995. Used by permission.

military on a special media campaign to educate people. The Armed Forces Network TV and radio people and the military newspapers have been very helpful getting the word out," he adds.

Caked in Dirt

Army units, especially, spend weeks on end training in the field, and when they have finished, their vehicles and equipment are caked in mud and dirt. In Europe, this dirt is home for the golden and burrowing nematodes, minute organisms not native to the States, which attack tomato and potato crops. So equipment that the military wants to ship home has to be cleaned thoroughly. Soldiers from the units that own the equipment do the actual washing. Inspectors are on hand to check the results and order rewashing as necessary.

The European military preclearance program is big. In 1994, the military used 462 inspectors at 77 sites in 9 countries. These inspectors cleared nearly 75,000 shipments of personal property and 18,200 private vehicles of service members returning to the United States. Navy and Air Force inspectors routinely inspect diverse cargo types from electronic components to whole jet engines. Added to this are special missions to clear aircraft and ships involved in military exercises or wars. The expertise of the European preclearance program is well known to service chiefs, and the Army maintains a special company of military police to handle these contingencies.

"Our inspectors have been to Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Rwanda for customs and agriculture duties," says 1st Sgt. Gregory

Hutchinson of the Army's 560th Military Police Company. "Generally, they arrive as a conflict is winding down and clear the first soldiers and equipment returning to the United States. While there, they train other military police who are already in the war zone to do the inspections. Our Customs Service and APHIS advisers are on hand to supervise these jobs," he says.

Being an inspector is satisfying for the soldiers and civilians involved in preclearance. "I've been doing it for 3 years," says Army Spec. Eduardo B. Carballo, an inspector at the Mannheim inspection field office in Germany. "It's satisfying, especially when you find something major," says Carballo, recalling the fulfillment he felt when he found his first gypsy moth pupae. "It makes you feel your job is worthwhile." ♦

"Entertrainer's" Change Strategies Keep Them Laughing

The main trouble with both bureaucracies and corporate America is that they suffer from HDD—humor deficit disorder, says Mary Fisher, "entertrainer," formerly a corporate employee, a stand-up comedienne, and a Government worker. Fisher "entertrained" an APHIS audience in Riverdale, MD, this past fall, assuring members that a sense of humor is the strongest anecdote against resistance and a potent weapon for change.

Reinvention Advocates sponsored the two workshops—the Survivor Syndrome and Strategies for Managing Change—to give employees struggling with change in their own offices and lives some positive ways to deal with it.

Using stand-up comedy routines and recounting embarrassing (and funny) moments in her own life, Fisher illustrated her own problems with change. "If you don't have trouble with change, this lecture is not for you," she advised, but no one left the room.

Change means loss, Fisher points out, so we grieve, we feel sadness or anger, or we deny that change is happening. If we can't change the situation—the shrinking dollar, the competition, our customers—we can change the way we view it. If we look at a problem with humor, we can become resilient and learn to survive—even thrive.

Humor is a great leveler, Fisher proved over and over again during her morning at Riverdale. Once people laugh together, they can work together. For those suffering from HDD, Fisher advises seeing or doing something to laugh about daily. Employees who would like to view a videotape of this Fisher workshop can request a copy from the Riverdale library (301-734-5240).

Fisher later facilitated a group discussion with employees who have been working on changing the organization and who have experienced resistance to change. Eva Ring, one of the Reinvention Advocates, offers her notes on the strategies that the group developed in this workshop for producing a more cooperative and positive approach to change.

Contact Ring, (301-734-3582) for more information on strategies for coping with active and passive resister behaviors.



APHIS PHOTO BY DENNIS TRAINUM

Comedian Mary Fisher warms up her audience: From left, Phyllis York, Sheila Clemons, and Clarence Lemon, all of M&B.

Active-Resister Behaviors

1. When people express general objections, such as, "I liked things better the way they were before," ask them to be more specific. Ask probing questions and be a good listener. Maybe they haven't been included in the vision of where things are headed.
2. Ignore personal attacks.
3. Become a good listener. If possible, take a listening-skills course.
4. Practice patience.
5. Value and maintain self-esteem (theirs/yours)
6. Don't assume you have the only truth. Honor the truth that comes from each position.
7. Selling the problem is critical. Why is it necessary to change? Make connections to the real world and to the driving forces for change.
8. Provide ongoing information to help diffuse and prevent rumors that breed fear and anxiety.
9. Take any training you can in conflict management and in dealing with difficult people.
10. Encourage appropriate types of humor.

Passive Resister Behaviors

1. Don't buy into "victim" behavior or release people from personal accountability. Resist the temptation to solve problems for people. Instead, put it back on them. Ask, "What could you do to

make this situation better?"

2. Stay focused on the behavior; don't get personal.

3. Practice assertiveness; if necessary, take training in this area. For instance, when people are complaining to the wrong people, confront them, saying something like, "I understand you've been complaining about this to (whom-ever), but I'm the one responsible, and I'd like to hear your concerns."

4. Continually work on clarifying expectations and help foster accountability through mechanisms such as:

- Agreements—Reiterate orally what you have agreed to; e.g., "My understanding, then, is that you will be doing 'x' and I will be doing 'y'." Clarify time frames.

- Boundaries—Ensure that boundaries are understood, and feel free to re-negotiate boundaries if necessary.

- Checklists—Write things down; keep track of plans and progress.

5. Think through a commitment before making it. For instance, if someone wants you to agree to do something, but you're not sure it's the right approach or that you want to commit, you can always say something like, "It sounds good in theory. Give me 24 hours to think about it, and I'll get back to you with an answer." ♦

Congratulations

... to three PPQ employees—**Terry McGovern, Jane Levy, and Vic Mastro**—for receiving the Forest Service's 1995 Chief's International Forestry Award. These PPQ employees and three Forest Service employees—Steve Munson, Donna Leonard, and Dan Kucera—received the award for their "extraordinary skill and perseverance in establishing an on-the-ground Asian gypsy moth monitoring program in the Russian far east."

This USDA team designed the trapping plan for the ports and surrounding forests in the Russian far east and directed its implemen-

tation. Working with their counterparts in Russia, they installed traps and checked them each field season. During this time, they developed excellent relationships with the Federal Forest Service of Russia and with the State Plant Quarantine service of the Russian Federation. As trade expands between the two countries, these relationships could prove invaluable.

... to **Richanne Lomkin**, Saul Wilson Scholar and summer intern with VS' Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health. Lomkin has won the 1996 Cliff D. Carpenter Youth Program Essay Contest and

will present a poster entitled "Poultry Science and Technology—New Vistas" at the World Poultry Congress in New Delhi, India, in September 1996. Lomkin is one of two students awarded up to \$1,500 for travel and related expenses to attend the congress. She competed with students in poultry-related departments at the B.S., M.S., Ph.D., and D.V.M. levels throughout the United States for this award. Upon her return from India, Lomkin will spend October 1996 at North Carolina State University for intensive poultry disease training. ♦

Focus on Retirees

By Frank Mulhern, former Administrator and AAO facilitator

At the November meeting of the APHIS Alumni Association, seven retirees local to the Riverdale, MD, meeting site met and talked to alumni via telephone conference sites in North Carolina, Georgia, Michigan, New Jersey, and Reno Nevada. Four current employees also participated from various sites.

The purpose of this meeting was to agree on a mission statement, bylaws, board of directors, length of terms, frequency of meetings, and dues. Believe it or not, we accomplished the entire agenda, and I suspect that this feat may be a first. We are including the mission statement in this column; for a copy of the rules and by-laws, call or write Terry Hall, 202-720-6544, Room 0099 South Building, 12th and Independence Ave, SW, Washington, DC 20250.

Larry Slagle chaired the meeting because I was participating in the annual meeting of the U.S. Animal Health Association in Reno, Nevada. Nevada veterinarian Doris Autry let me use her office and stayed to participate in the meeting. Barbara Platt, administrative support assistant, helped me link to the Riverdale site and also participated.

"We are in the process of developing a list of the alumni and their addresses with the cooperation of Terry Hall (PPD)," reported

Norvan Meyer. We will continue our efforts to see that all interested alumni will receive *Inside APHIS* after they retire so we can communicate with them through the alumni news section in it.

During the discussions of the mission statement, alumni discussed assisting its members and families of deceased members in securing information about the benefits of retirees. To provide such help, we would need a task force. We don't intend to duplicate what OPM does.

Administrator Lonnie King has agreed to meet with a group of alumni to discuss increasing the awareness of employees at the State and local levels in our association. We would like to be able to advise former employees to contact their local APHIS office to get more information about the Alumni Association.

In December I moved to California, but I hope to establish an APHIS office site link so I can participate in future alumni meetings. ♦

Mission of the AAO

The mission of the APHIS Alumni Organization is to foster and maintain traditional high levels of service to agriculture and the public through a cadre of resources serving in an advisory capacity to the agency. The Alumni Organization members will share their life experiences and knowledge with the agency and serve as the history of the organization in furthering the mission and vision of the agency. The Organization will

1. Provide a link between APHIS and its retirees to further the APHIS mission;
2. Maintain a network among retirees and foster communications among them;
3. Maintain a skills database of retired employees.
4. Recommend the use of techni-

cally and administratively competent APHIS Alumni Organization personnel for emergencies, for training, and as consultants, or for special needs;

5. Obtain updated information and training from APHIS for alumni to maintain their competency;

6. Emphasize objectivity on scientific issues to counter political interventions by industries, countries, activists, and media;

7. Provide advice and counsel to the agency.

8. Communicate the achievements of APHIS within APHIS Alumni Organization members;

9. Share information on retirement issues and experiences; and,

10. Remain informed nationally and internationally on changes from a trade and animal and plant health point of view and on the APHIS role in such changes.

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